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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

THURSDAY, March 16, 1933. Agriculture

5Hh
(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Fighting Clothes Moths." Information from the Bureau of Entomology, United States Department of Agriculture.

Odds and ends of household news was the subject scheduled for today's chat, but so many requests have come in for information on clothes moths, that I've changed my plans. Let's discuss waging war on our enemy, the clothes moth.

In the days before we had steam-heated houses, we housekeepers only had to think about moths during one season of the year--the warm season. If we packed the winter clothes away carefully in the spring, that was the end of worry. But those were the days when many parts of the house were cold except during the summer, when only the living quarters of the house were heated, and when clothes closets, bedrooms and chests were like a cold storage plant. Moths just won't thrive in a cold or frigid environment. But nowadays our homes, upstairs and down, are warm the year around. Moths in steam-heated houses can be alive, comfortable and active even when the temperature outside is below zero. So we have to keep a constant eye on our woolens, furs or any other articles liable to attack.

Many housekeepers get a panicky feeling when they see a little moth or miller flying anywhere around the house. The moths that fly directly toward the light are not the ones to fear. The real villain is the tiny, buff-colored glistening miller who likes darkness and flits about in the dark corners, or, when disturbed, tries to hide behind clothes or curtains. Watch out for this moth. She's the one who lays eggs in furs and wool garments. Of course, the damage doesn't begin until the eggs hatch and the tiny worm or larvae come out hungry and start feasting on our clothes. But the moth is an enemy to kill in whatever stage you find it, whether it's a flying miller, a white egg no bigger than a pinhead, a small white feeding worm, or a tiny cocoon.

If you are to succeed in preventing moth damage in your home, you must wage war on these insects the year around. Very soon now you'll be putting away the heavy winter clothes. What is the safest method to follow in storing them? First, free them from any possible moth eggs. Take the clothes into the sunlight and brush and air them well. To be doubly sure of removing all the eggs, wash the garments that are washable and have the others cleaned. Thorough brushing, shaking, airing and sunning--this treatment for clothes usually does away with any eggs or larvae that may be in them. Then pack the clean garments away immediately out of reach of the moths. You can wrap them with heavy unbroken paper and seal all the edges with gummed paper. You can hang them in paper garment bags or store them in tight chests, trunks or boxes.

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Garment bags are safe places to store clothes if they are entirely sealed so there is not one tiny hole for a moth to enter and if the garment was clean and free of moths when it went into the bag. Cedar chests also are safe and convenient places for storing clothes, if the garments are clean and free from moths when you put them in. Clothes stored in trunks or tightly closed boxes will be safer if you put in one pound of naphthalene or paradichlorobenzene crystals. These substances cost little and will keep the moths out. Naphthalene comes either in the form of flakes or moth balls, whichever you prefer.

Now about those woollens that you can't store away for a whole season--the summer sweaters, the golf hose, the blankets that you will be using occasionally all during the summer? Well, moths won't do damage to clothes that you use every day or so. But if you allow these articles to lie without attention for some time, the moths are likely to get in their dirty work before you know it. Even constant watching may not be enough to save your clothes in hot humid climates. So any and all woollens that you use just occasionally need frequent sunning, airing and brushing. Spraying with anti-moth liquids may offer some protection, but no solution is known at present that completely and permanently immunizes the garments against moths. Don't make the mistake of thinking that your clothes are safe by merely introducing the fumes of naphthalene or paradichlorobenzene in your closets. These fumes are effective only when they are very concentrated. That means that they need to be used in tight chests or compartments where the fumes can't escape.

Scientists in the Bureau of Entomology who have made a special study of clothes moths have exploded a few notions about them. For example, they have discovered that many of the things we women have been using to keep moths out, just don't have any effect at all. Cayenne pepper, tobacco, lavender flowers, allspice, black pepper, salt, borax, eucalyptus leaves and red cedar leaves--none of these bother clothes moths at all. The two substances that are effective against moths are naphthalene and paradichlorobenzene, and these only when used in sufficient quantities and put in tight containers such as trunks, chests and air-tight closets.

The important points to remember about moth prevention are: first, clean clothes and free them from moths before you pack them away; second, store them only in moth-proof containers; third, keep clothes in occasional use in light, airy closets and treat them to frequent brushings, sunnings and cleanings.

Tomorrow, we'll discuss the very latest news on cooking vegetables from the laboratories of the Bureau of Home Economics.

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